

The current funding framework for local government is archaic and out of date. It assumes that property values will continue to rise. The current dubious agenda re sea rise, if pursued, will very soon have a major detrimental effect on property values consequently local authorities must radically modify their method of revenue gathering. The differential provision in the Ratings Act is capable of overcoming this problem by applying a flat rate or user-pays system. The simple relief to the ratepayer would be to charge what is appropriate to recover costs across the board. It is hypocritical to suggest that so-called climate change must be addressed but at the same time encourage what is arguably the biggest influence on the climate – tourism. Central government's obvious lack of enthusiasm to declare a climate crisis makes further mockery of New Zealand's lack of cohesion. Shockingly, this is brought about due to the total lack of a prescriptive constitutional structure. As it is, central and local government can and do dismiss rules laid down by Parliament to suit themselves. Society cannot be expected to tolerate this nonsense any longer.

Local government must stop accepting what is handed down from central government without appropriate funding. We would be interested to discover if local government conferences ever resolve to reject more power without financial support from central government. Infrastructure must take precedence over monuments to elected reps and LG staff must focus on performance over ensuring their continual employment through endless report writing and no action. They must also be held accountable for the current ill-disciplined negligent attitude to alarming blowout costs on projects.

The current government's announcement that the RMA is to be radically modified has the potential to cut approximately 40% off the cost of most projects (public and private). The whole process of LG administration is farcical. To suggest that transparency occurs when not even the Ombudsman can demand certain actions be taken is a case in point. The 1989 Act is the biggest culprit. It allows CEO's to have virtual autonomy which, in turn, has reduced LG reps' role to nothing much more than rubber stamping. The almost total disregard of community input into Annual Plans has become an epidemic. The "significance policy" allows any number of items to be favourably distorted in the promotion of popular projects which are frequently encouraged by an infestation of lawyers consultants.

You will never get good decision making so long as CEO's are legally allowed to withhold information that they deem to be unfit for distribution. The whole structure of LG has been cunningly developed to virtually exclude reps from the process. Transparency is not possible under the current structure. What's more, LG employment law has become so protective of employees to the extent that they can walk in and out of positions whenever it suits with no penalty for their often negligent behaviour. This begs the question as to why the grossly out of proportion wages these people receive is allowed to continue.

The disproportionate application of the rating system is what concerns many people. No other facet of society operates such a warped system. Society doesn't expect theatre goers for example to pay according to income. That same principle applies to all basic commodities including fuel. The total lack of the need to perform to community needs by LG staff as opposed to a commercial world is the main reason why two things happen:

- 1) Project priority gets manipulated by staff to suit their agenda.
- 2) Writing of report after report at enormous cost to satisfy inexperienced and impractical councillors is draining a large percentage of ratepayer funds.

User pays is the only proven method of running an economy. The tough part in instituting this policy is to ensure that levels of society are able to have a commensurate income. One way of achieving this would be to apply the same criteria to the likes of LG employees as society does to wage earners in the private sector. This would have the effect of significantly reducing cost to the general public, particularly the low income earners. It is to be noted that not only are LG wages higher than the private sector, employees also enjoy a very substantial handout by the ratepayer in the form of superannuation. This, of course, is additional to national super which only the commodity producer supplies.

Local government must be instructed to refrain from encouraging self-interest organisations to dip their hands into ratepayers coffers. This sort of corruption has completely undermined the effectiveness of councils like Nelson, where essential infrastructure maintenance has been neglected in favour of serving the needs of numerous lobby groups asking for a handout.

It is depressing to note that findings of the Shand Report, that we all spent a great deal of time on, were never implemented. It will be more than a little disappointing if this exercise goes the same way.

We will never have confidence in a system that allows councils to disregard normal standards of behaviour e.g. Mangawhai Heads debacle. We are all aware of Wellington's railway woes which will never be resolved until those in charge have their pay affected by their procrastination. It is absurd that the public has become the victim of two authorities challenging each other over who is responsible.

With reference to treaty obligations. New Zealand must address this confusing situation. Either the British crown is responsible for treaty obligations or the State of New Zealand. We can no longer be expected to put up with the confusion that reigns, identifying the distinction would eliminate the embarrassment that occurs when citizens are confronted with the issue. As it is the Waitangi Treaty like the infamous R M A are constantly being manipulated by clever operators to endlessly suite their particular agendas.

